3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
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The Ceremony

Government messengers' quarters, and some stores. The big Church of Scotland mission of Lubwa, with its teachers' training school, lay a few miles away. It was therefore a matter of some surprise to me to hear that the ceremony was to be carried out in a village so much in contact with European civilization. The reason was, I think, that the mistress of the ceremonies (*nacimbusa*), Nangoshye, was a sister of the head Government messenger and living under his protection. She was a woman of some position in the neighbourhood and reckoned herself as of royal rank although she was only a member of a junior branch of the royal clan. She had an unusual personality, great organizing power, and a sharp tongue that sent her fellows scampering to carry out her commands. She was extremely anxious to keep alive the days of her past glory and to teach and interest the girls of the neighbourhood. I estimated her age as between 50 and 60, and she had an unusually good memory. She was well known to me as she had travelled with me through the neighbourhood for a period of at least four months, and had been one of my chief informants. She was anxious that I should see a ceremony correctly carried out, and the fact that one of her paternal nieces was due to be initiated gave her a suitable opportunity to arrange this. It was also a time of great food shortage, and she realized that it would have been difficult to get sufficient beer for the ceremony unless I had been able to procure the necessary millet for her.

I think the chisungu ceremony would have been performed for this particular girl, and a companion from a neighbouring village, if I had not been there, but it would probably have taken place at a later date and on a smaller scale and possibly the scene would have been shifted to a more remote village. It is certainly true that my presence attracted more women from the surrounding village than would otherwise have attended and that an effort was made to carry out the rites as nearly according to tradition as possible. The younger women spoke of the ceremony as an unusually important one for the neighbourhood, chiefly, I think, owing to their admiration and respect for Nangoshye. The rites were, therefore, more elaborate than were usual in that area in 1931 but much less long and complex than would have been the case in pre-European days. The whole ceremony was complete in just